and the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research highlighted that ASEAN and India offer a large market with a combined population of 1.485 billion people and therefore, there is a great potential to enhance trade and investment flows between India and ASEAN countries.

(c) At the first AEM-India Consultations, it was agreed that an ASEAN-India Economic Linkages Task Force be established to follow up the recommendations of the joint study on AFTA-India Linkages. The Task Force should submit its recommendations, including a draft framework agreement to enhance the ASEAN-India Trade and Economic Cooperation, to the next AEM-India Consultations in 2003 for further consideration and follow up action.

Misuse of Export Promotion Schemes by companies

2534. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of companies in Delhi who have cheated Government during the last two years by misusing export promotion schemes, such as duty drawback, duty free replenishment certificate scheme and duty exemption pass book scheme;

(b) the total amount involved in these cheating cases;

(c) the number of persons arrested and the number of cases instituted against them and number of convictions in these cases; and

(d) other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) to (d) As per reports received from Central Bureau of Investigation/Directorate of Revenue Intelligence/Customs, 13 Companies in Delhi have allegedly been involved in misuse of Export Promotion Schemes and the investigating Agencies have initiated action against them as per their respective procedures. Since investigations have not yet been finalized, it is not feasible to assess the exact amount involved in these cases.

Taking note of these complaints, Directorate General of Foreign Trade have placed these firms on 'Denied Entity List' and consequently they are not entitled to grant of further licences and other benefits under Export-Import Policy till finalization of their cases. Besides, action under Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992, wherever necessary, is also contemplated. However, this Act does not provide for arrests/ convictions.

Rising price of cement

†2535. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any scheme has been formulated to bring down the continuously increasing prices of cement in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the procedure adopted by Government of Chhattisgarh in this regard; and

(d) the details of success in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN SINGH): (a) and (b) Cement is fully decontrolled commodity and its prices are determined by the market forces of demand and supply. The Government does not regulate these but only monitors fluctuations in these. The prices of cement as shown in the enclosed Statement (*see* below) have however, not shown an increasing trend for over a year.

(c) and (d) Prices of cement even in the Chhattisgarh State are determined by market forces of demand and supply as explained at (a) and (b) above. However, on a special appeal made by the Chief Minister of State, the cement companies supplied cement only for Government works at marginally concessional rate for a limited period of six months. Now, even for Government works, the State Government has to pay the price determined by the market forces of demand and supply.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.